SUPERMAN
IN ACTION COMICS
719
GUEST-STARRING
BATMAN
MICHELINIE
DWYER &
RODIER

METROPOLIS.
CAN'T I HELP, LOIS?
YOU'VE BEEN SO NICE, LETTING ME STAY AT YOUR APARTMENT AND ALL, I--
OH, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, LORI!
I'VE DUSTED THIS PLACE ONCE A WEEK FOR YEARS! I THINK I'M CAPABLE OF HANDLING SUCH AN ARDUOUS TASK!
WHY'S SHE SO IRRITABLE? GEE, IT'S NOT LIKE SHARING THE LOAD IS GOING TO KILL HER!
THUMP!
WHA--?

HAZARD'S CHOICE

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SUPERMAN CREATED BY
JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER

LOIS!

SOON...

NO QUESTION, SUPERMAN-- SHE'S BEEN POISONED!

METROPOLIS GENERAL

TESTS INDICATE THIS ACTION FIGURE IS COATED WITH A TOXIC AGENT.

MS. LANE APPARENTLY ABSORBED IT THROUGH HER SKIN OVER A PERIOD OF TIME--

--UNTIL THE POISON BUILT TO A CRITICAL LEVEL.

IS THERE A CURE?

PERHAPS, WITH STUDY, ONE COULD BE DEVELOPED IN A FEW WEEKS, MAYBE A MONTH...

...BUT IF MS. LANE DOESN'T STABILIZE, HER VITAL FUNCTIONS WILL SHUT DOWN IN JUST OVER TWO HOURS!

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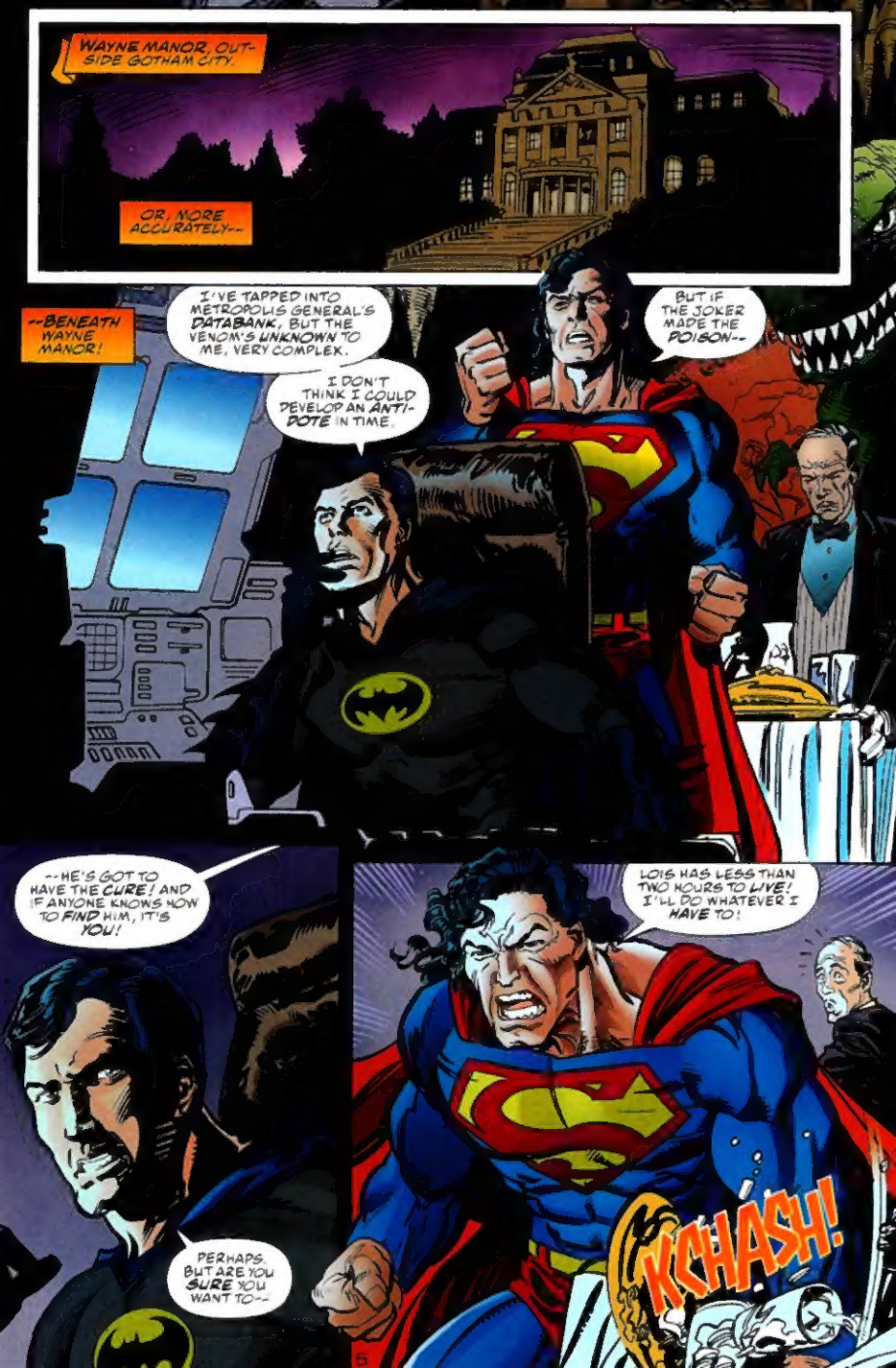
I'VE SAVED LOIS FROM ARMIES! FROM CATACLYSMS!
I WON'T LET HER DIE LIKE THIS!
BUT WHAT WAS IT THAT MONSTER SAID?
"WITH THE JOKER, IT'S NEVER OVER"?*
*IN ACTION #714.
"HE SENT THAT ACTION FIGURE AS A TAUNT, AND LOIS KEPT IT FOR A SOUVENIR.
"I SCANNED IT WITH X-RAY VISION, LOOKING FOR TRAPS, BUT NEVER THOUGHT TO USE MICROSCOPIC VISION!
"AND NOW LOIS IS DYING, BECAUSE I SCREWED UP!"
AND THERE'S ONLY ONE HOPE FOR HER SALVATION!


WAYNE MANOR, OUTSIDE GOTHAM CITY.
OR, MORE ACCURATELY--
--BENEATH WAYNE MANOR!
I'VE TAPPED INTO METROPOLIS GENERAL'S DATABANK, BUT THE VENOM'S UNKNOWN TO ME, VERY COMPLEX.
I DON'T THINK I COULD DEVELOP AN ANTIDOTE IN TIME.
BUT IF THE JOKER MADE THE POISON--
--HE'S GOT TO HAVE THE CURE! AND IF ANYONE KNOWS HOW TO FIND HIM, IT'S YOU!
PERHAPS. BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO--
LOIS HAS LESS THAN TWO HOURS TO LIVE! I'LL DO WHATEVER I HAVE TO!
KCHASH!

YES.
I GUESS YOU WILL.
ALL RIGHT. I'VE REASON TO BELIEVE JOKER'S HENCHMEN ARE GOING TO HIT AN ARMORY ON 49TH STREET AT MIDNIGHT.
MAYBE THEY CAN GIVE US A CLUE.
I'LL MEET YOU THERE!
GOOD. LOIS WILL HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE--
"--IF WE TACKLE THIS--
"--TOGETHER!"

METROPOLIS.
DONE!
THIS STORY ON "POLITICS IN ATLANTA" FOR THE PLANET'S PRE-OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT TOOK A LOT LONGER THAN I EXPECTED...
...BUT AT LEAST IT KEPT MY MIND OFF LOIS'S BEING IN THE HOSPITAL.
"I have a dream..."
AND I THINK LOIS WOULD APPROVE; IT'S A POWERFUL PIECE.
ESPECIALLY THAT CLOSING QUOTATION I USED BY MARTIN LUTHER--
--KING?
NO! I-IT CAN'T BE!
I-IT--
--ISN'T?
GONE.
OH, MAN...
...I'VE BEEN READING TOO MUCH STEPHEN KING!

GOTHAM, THE 49TH STREET ARMORY, MIDNIGHT.
OKAY, THAT'S IT! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!
NOT YET.
h-huh?! WHAT THE CRUD'S HE DOIN' IN GOTHAM?
THESE ASSAULT ARMOR COMPONENTS ARE EXPERIMENTAL, MAYBE STRONG ENOUGH TO DECK EVEN A SUPERMAN!
GOTHAM GARRISON
TRY.
QUICK, OPEN THE CRATE!
KWAMB!
IT... I-I-T WORKED?

HEY, GUYS! LOOKIT--
--THIS...?
NO ONE SURPRISES ME...
GOTHAM GARBAGE
THAP!
...TWICE!
EARL'S HOT-DOGGIN' GAVE US A CHANCE TA ARMOR UP!
BAKE 'IM!
CH-CH-CHUF!

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.
CHPOOM!
HNGF--!
A LASER? GET SERIOUS.
UH-OH. THIRD ONE'S SMART, USING JET-POWERED BOOTS TO ESCAPE.
BUT LET'S SEE HOW STABLE HE STAYS--
--WITH ONLY ONE!
hnh?!

KLANG!!
TALK!
WHERE'S THE JOKER?
YOU KIDDIN'? I-I'D NEVER WORK FOR THAT CREEP!
HE'S NUTS!
HIS EYES DON'T LIE, AND THAT CAN ONLY MEAN BATMAN--
--DID!
ARKHAM ASYLUM
WELL, WELL...
...SHOULDN'T YOU BE FLAPPING AROUND A BELFRY OR SOMETHING?

YOU'RE KILLING LOIS LANE
I WANT THE ANTIDOTE
HMM, LET ME THINK ABOUT IT
NAH.
IF I HIT YOU LONG ENOUGH, HARD ENOUGH
YOU'LL TELL ME
COME NOW... DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT?
NO
OH, THIS IS RICH! I LOVE IT WHEN YOU RUN AROUND LIKE A CHICKEN WITH IT'S HEAD CUT OFF--

--WHEN ALL THE WHILE THE ANSWER'S RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE!
LONG MOMENTS LATER
I FIGURED YOU'D CATCH UP BY NOW!
WHY DID YOU LIE TO ME?
THAT WILD GOOSE CHASE TOOK TIME! SO I'D BE SCANNING THE CITY TO FIND YOU! AND SO HAS LESS THAN AN HOUR TO LIVE!
YOU'RE JUSTIFYING MY DECISION EVEN NOW, SUPERMAN. YOU'RE TOO INVOLVED IN DANGER OF LOSING CONTROL.
I WAS GOING TO CHECK THAT ARMORY I LEAD MYSELF. BUT REALIZED IT WAS A GOOD WAY TO KEEP YOU BUSY WHILE I PURSUED MY OWN INVESTIGATION
JOKER'S HERE?
NO. BESIDES, HE LACKS THE EXPERTISE TO CREATE A DESIGNER POISON. HE UNDOUBTEDLY COERCED SOMEONE ELSE, SOMEONE RIGHT UNDER MY NOSE

WHAT?
THAT WAS HIS SICK LITTLE CLUE: THERE'S A SCIENTIST HERE NAMED PHILLIP DRUMM AND THE NAME "PHIL DRUMM" IS A HOMONYM FOR "PHILTRUM," THE CLEFT IN A PERSON'S UPPER LIP
...RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE."
HERE! HE'S--
--DEAD?
ONE OF THE JOKER'S GOONS MUST HAVE KILLED HIM.
YOU'VE TALKED TO HIM--YOU MUST KNOW WHERE HE IS!
Silly Bat--
Drumm doesn't have the cure--I do!
--Joker
P.S.--
Are we having fun yet?
THERE'S A NOTE.
AND YOU WON'T LOSE ME AGAIN.
I KNOW
Silly Bat--

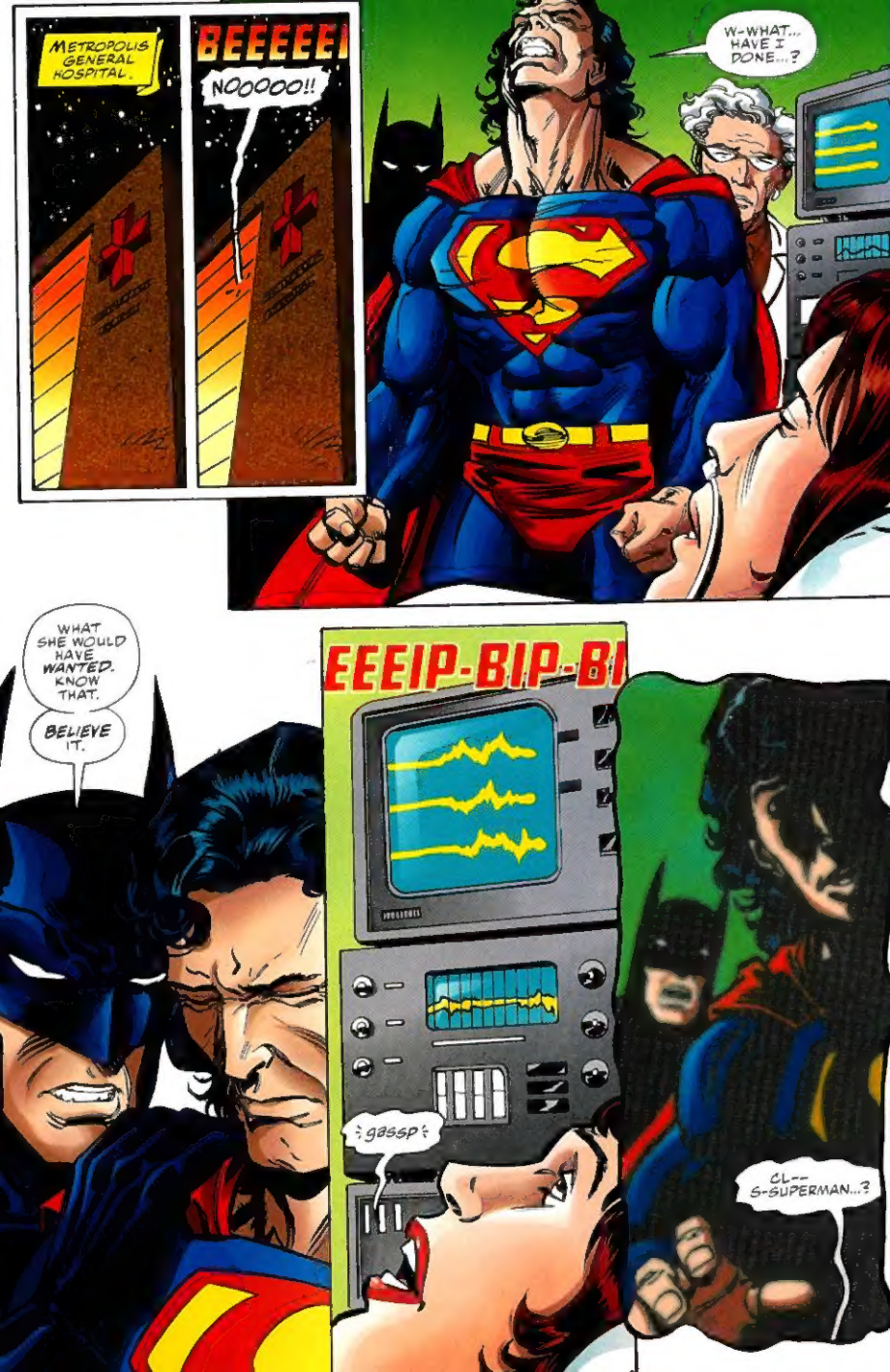
AH, YOU BROUGHT A LITTLE FRIEND THIS TIME
LOIS HAS THIRTY MINUTES LEFT--
--AND YOU HAVE LESS THAN FIVE!
BETTER TALK, JOKER. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I CAN HOLD H M BACK.
OOOOH, "GOOD COP, BAD COP" I LOVE THE CLASS OF
NOW YOU LISTEN. THIS SYRINGE--
--NEVER MIND HOW I GOT IT--
--IS FILLED WITH THE STUFF THAT FELLED MS. LANE BUT WHEN THAT'S MY CHEMICALLY ALTERED BLOOD, IT'LL PRODUCE ANTIBODIES, ITS OWN CURE. THE ONLY DRAWBACK--
--IS THAT I'LL DIE IN THE PROCESS!
WHICH MEANS SUPERMAN, THAT TO SAVE LOIS LANE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME!

SIMPLE: YOU CHEEZED ME OFF BY MESSING IN MY AFFAIRS.*
NORMALLY, I EVISCERATE PEOPLE FOR THAT
*ACTION #14
BUT WITH SOMEONE WHO'S INVULNERABLE, THINGS GET A BIT TRICKY.
SO I DECIDED IF I COULDN'T DESTROY YOU, I'D DESTROY WHAT YOU ARE.
AND SINCE YOU'RE ALMOST AS FANATICAL ABOUT THE SANCTITY OF LIFE AS BATMAN IS, TAKING A LIFE WITH YOUR OWN HANDS-- EVEN MY LIFE-- IS BOUND TO SEND YOU OVER THE EDGE!
I DON'T GET IT!
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
I'LL LEAVE THIS MORTAL COIL TRUE, BUT BY DOING SO, I'LL BE TAKING EARTH'S MIGHTIEST CHAMPION WITH ME!
YOU MAY APPLAUD NOW

TWENTY MINUTES
WAIT.
YOU'RE PROTECTING HIM?!
I PROTECT PEOPLE WHO NEED IT RIGHT NOW, THAT'S YOU
YOU THINK I WANT TO KILL HIM? KILL ANYONE? MY WHOLE EXISTENCE IS BASED ON SAVING -- YES! AND THAT'S JUST WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO--
--SAVE LOIS!
THAT ISN'T A TRADE-OFF YOU CAN MAKE
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY! A TRANSFUSION... ANYTHING!
LOIS IS--
I KNOW WHAT SHE IS
YOU USE YOUR HEAD.
HEY!

BUTT OUT, BATS! MAN WANTS TO KILL ME. LET 'IM!
REMEMBER WHEN YOU LET THOSE PHANTOM ZONE CRIMINALS DIE?* YOUR MIND BROKE DOWN BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T DEAL WITH THE GUILT.
JOKER KNOWS THAT, AND HE'S USING IT
* SUPERMAN #22
'COURSE, I PROBABLY WON'T MAKE THE FUNERAL... THEY'RE RATHER STRICT ABOUT FIELD TRIPS HERE. BUT MAYBE I'LL SEND FLOWERS. DO YOU THINK MS LANE LIKES...
...PANSIES?
DON'T--!
THAP!
YOU'RE LOSING IT, REACTING INSTEAD OF REASONING. THAT'S JUST WHAT HE WANTS!
DON'T LET HIM DRAG YOU DOWN HIS A...EY!

I CAN CRUSH MOUNTAINS! MELT STEEL! ARE YOU SAYING I CAN'T SAVE ONE WOMAN?
LIFE DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS. IT'S A SERIES OF CHOICES, AND SOME ARE FLAT-OUT NO WIN.
WE HAVE TO MAKE JUDGMENTS, BUT WE'RE NOT JUDGES. ALL WE CAN DO IS BALANCE HEART AND MIND, PRAY WE'RE RIGHT, THEN CHOKE DOWN THE HURT AND GO ON.
hmm, WHO NEXT? OLSEN? GOODY-BOY KENT? KENT'S PARENTS...?
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, BATMAN!
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO HURT JOKER! BUT--
TH-THINK... OF LOIS.
SHE'S ALL I AM THINKING OF!
HARDLY.
YOU'RE WRAPPED UP IN YOURSELF, WHAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN. YOU SHOUT ABOUT LOIS BEING IMPORTANT, BUT WHAT WOULD SHE WANT YOU TO DO? THINK, MAN. FOR YOUR SOUL, AND FOR HERS...
...THINK!


METROPOLIS GENERAL HOSPITAL.
BEEEEE
NOOOOO!!
W-WHAT... HAVE I DONE...?
WHAT SHE WOULD HAVE WANTED. KNOW THAT.
BELIEVE IT.
EEEIP-BIP-BI
gasp
CL-- S-SUPERMAN...?

AMAZING! WE'LL HAVE TO RUN TESTS, OF COURSE...
...BUT HER VITAL SIGNS APPEAR TO BE RETURNING TO NORMAL!
I'LL RUN MY OWN TESTS, BUT I THINK WE'LL FIND THIS WAS ALL JUST A BIG JOKE.
WHAT?!
THAT POISON PROBABLY WOULD KILL JOKER, BUT ONLY TAKES OTHERS TO THE BRINK AND BRINGS THEM BACK. MAKING YOU TAKE A LIFE WHEN LOIS WOULD HAVE RECOVERED ANYWAY WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CRUELEST "PRANK" IN HISTORY.
YOU THINK HE WAS WILLING TO DIE, JUST TO MAKE ME SUFFER? BUT THAT'S--
--INSANE?
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
PERHAPS YOU'D SHARE YOUR DATA ON THE POISON, DOCTOR...?
HE DOESN'T NEED INFORMATION.
BUT HE KNOWS I NEED TO BE ALONE WITH LOIS. THANKS... AGAIN.
DID ALL THAT MEAN... YOU WERE GOING TO LET ME DIE?
I'VE NEVER FACED A HARDER DECISION, EVER.

BUT IF I'D KILLED THE JOKER, YOU WOULD HAVE HAD TO DEAL WITH IT, TOO, KNOWING I'D KILLED FOR YOU.
KNOWING YOU SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT DEATH, AND FOR THE DEATH OF WHATEVER IT KILLED INSIDE ME.
I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT, YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO... LIVE WITH IT.
I... UNDERSTAND.
I THINK.
THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS NOW IS THAT YOU'RE ALIVE...
"... IT'S OVER."
ONE OF MY BEST GAGS, AND THEY BLEW THE BLOODY PUNCH LINE! OH, WELL...
...I'VE GOT A MILLION OF 'EM!
HA HA HAHAHA
AHAH
HAHAHAHAHA
NEXT WEEK-- IN MAN the SPECTRE!